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SPINOZA AND THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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II.

Spinoza now proceeds to show that all books from Genesis to Kings present a coherent history, which aims at describing the ancient Jewish history from the origin of the people to the first destruction of the city, and from this follows, that the author of all these books was only *one and the same*. Having finished the narrative of the life of Moses, the author passes over to the history of Joshua with the words, "now after the death of Moses" (Josh. 1: 1). The same transition we find Judges 1: 1, "now after the death of Joshua;" to Judges is added by way of appendix the book of Ruth, "now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled." With Ruth, the author connects the first Book of Samuel, from which he passes over with the usual transition to the second book, and since the history of David is not yet finished, he joins to it the first Book of Kings, in which he continues the history of David, etc. The connection and the order of the narrative also indicate that it was only *one* historian, who had a special object in view. He commences with the first origin of the Hebrew nation, speaks of the laws of Moses given to this people, narrates the taking of the promised land, the apostasy of the people and its punishment; he then goes on to speak of the kings, pointing out that according to their obeying or disobeying the laws, they were either happy or unhappy, till finally the fall of the kingdom took place in consequence of disobeying the laws of God. Everything that did not contribute to the glorification of the Mosaic laws, the author either passed over with silence or referred the readers to other

writings. From the connection which outwardly and inwardly connects these books, and from the leading idea which rules the whole, Spinoza infers the unity of the authorship.¹

The author of all these books Spinoza supposes to be Ezra. The author who continued the history of Israel to the deliverance of Jehoiakin, cannot have lived before Ezra. During all this time the Scripture speaks only of Ezra as having "prepared his heart to seek the law of God, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments," who was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7: 6, 10), who explained the law (Neh. 8: 8). It is also probable that the book of Deuteronomy in its present form is a book of the law of God worked over by Ezra, as may be seen from such explanatory additions, as Deut. 2: 12 to vv. 3, 4; 10: 8, 9 to v. 5; from the introduction and all passages in which Moses is spoken of in the third person; also from the discrepancies in the decalogue, as the enlarged composition of the fourth commandment and the changed order in the tenth commandment. The book of Deuteronomy was probably worked over first by Ezra, because its beginning is not connected like the other books with the foregoing. Afterward he placed it in its present place in order to give a connected history from the creation to the first destruction of Jerusalem. He called his first five books after the name of Moses, because the latter's life is the main part thereof, and from the summary he took the denomination. The same was also the case with the following books as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, etc. But whether Ezra put the last file to this work and left it in such a finished state as he wished, we shall see in the following chapter.

Ezra, we are told by Spinoza in the ninth chapter, was not the final redactor. All that he did do was to collect the materials from different writers, made copies thereof, and left it without due examination and arrangement to posterity. Why Ezra did thus, Spinoza is at a loss to say. It may be that death prevented him from completing the work in all its parts. But that Ezra acted in that manner, may be seen from the few extant frag-

¹ What Bertheau, in introduction to his *Commentary on Judges*, p. xxvii, remarks fully coincides with Spinoza's result.

ments. Thus: 2 Kings 28: 17 seq. is taken from Isa. 36 seq.; 2 Kings 25 from Jer. 52; 2 Sam. 7 from 1 Chron. 19.

From the chronological data, Spinoza also infers that different sources were before the redactor. Thus, *e.g.*, the narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. Here we read in the first verse, "and it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren." This time must necessarily refer to the other which goes immediately before. But to this it cannot refer. The time intervening from Joseph's sale into Egypt to Jacob's arrival there amounts to about twenty-two years. Joseph's age when he was sold was seventeen, and when presented to Pharaoh, thirty. Computing the seven years of abundance and the two years of sterility, or $9+13$ we have twenty-two years. During this time Judah should have married, his wife should have had three sons, the two first should have been of an age to espouse Tamar, and should have married her successively; that after the death of the second, Judah should have diverted Tamar for some time with the hope of a marriage with his third son; that she should have deceived him, and conceived twins, of whom the elder begat two sons. All this presupposes a different chronology.

In the life of Jacob, the chronology, too, according to Spinoza, is full of contradictions. According to Gen. 47: 9, Jacob is 130 years old when presented to Pharaoh; deducting therefrom the twenty-two years of Jacob's separation from Joseph, the seventeen years of Joseph's age when he was sold, the seven years of service for Rachel, Jacob must have been eighty-four years when he took Leah for a wife. Dinah was seven years old when she was violated, and Simeon and Levi twelve to thirteen years when they massacred the Shechemites.

From this and other things, Spinoza infers that all is narrated pell-mell in the five books of the Pentateuch, that neither history nor narration is in the right place, that there is no regard to time, and all that we read there has been gathered and put confusedly together in order to be afterward sifted and arranged in proper order.

Spinoza also finds different sources in the book of Judges.

After a former narrator recorded in Joshua 24 the death of Joshua, and commenced to tell of the events after his death, (Judges 1 : 1 seq.), a new historian appears with Judges 2 : 6 seq. Spinoza also finds two records concerning David's appearance at Saul's court. According to the one, 1 Sam. 16, David was called to quiet, by music, Saul's evil spirit; according to the other, ch. 17, he was called in consequence of his victory over Goliath. The same difference, according to Spinoza, exists between ch. 26 and ch. 24, where Saul's meeting with David in the cave is narrated.

Spinoza finds a contradiction in the chronology of 1 Kings 6 : 1, where we read that Solomon completed the building of the temple in the 480th year after the exodus, a date which does not agree with the numbers given.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|-----|-------|
| Moses ruled the people in the wilderness | - | - | - | 40 | years |
| Joshua's leadership, according to Josephus and others, was | 26 | " | | | |
| Chushan Rishathaim's oppression lasted | - | - | - | 8 | " |
| Othniel judged | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| Moabite oppression under Eglon | - | - | - | 18 | " |
| Ehud and Shamgar | - | - | - | 80 | " |
| Jabin's oppression | - | - | - | 20 | " |
| Rest | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| Midianite oppression | - | - | - | 7 | " |
| Gideon | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| Abimelech | - | - | - | 3 | " |
| Tola | - | - | - | 23 | " |
| Jair | - | - | - | 22 | " |
| Oppression by Philistines and Midianites | - | - | - | 18 | " |
| Jephthah | - | - | - | 6 | " |
| Ibzan of Bethlehem | - | - | - | 7 | " |
| Elon, the Zebulonite | - | - | - | 10 | " |
| Abdon | - | - | - | 8 | " |
| The Philistines again oppress Israel | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| Samson | - | - | - | 20 | " |
| Eli | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| The Philistines again oppress Israel | - | - | - | 20 | " |
| David's reign | - | - | - | 40 | " |
| Solomon's reign to the building of the Temple | - | - | - | 4 | " |
| Total | - | - | - | 580 | " |

To this must be added the years after Joshua's death to the oppression under Chushan Rishathaim. In Judges 2: 7-10 the history of many years is certainly compressed. Besides, we must add the years of Samuel's and Saul's reign. The passage 1 Sam. 13: 1 is evidently corrupt, for the age of Saul when he commenced to reign is omitted, though it is stated that he reigned two years. But according to 1 Sam. 27: 7 David remained among the Philistines one year and four months, so that the rest of Saul's history must have transpired within eight months.¹ Finally, we must also add the years of anarchy, cf. Judg. 17 seq.

From all this Spinoza infers that the numbers of years cannot be fixed with safety from the historical books and that the different histories point to different chronologies. He also finds differences in the sources themselves. Thus the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and the "Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" differ. According to 2 Kings 1: 17 Jehoram of Israel becomes king in the second year of Jehoram of Judah, and according to 2 Kings 8: 16, Jehoram of Judah becomes king in the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel.

Spinoza emphasizes the fact that the text as we have it now did not come down to us in a perfect state, and that mistakes have crept into it. This of course, he says, will be denied by those who assert that a special providence has watched over the text, and that the various readings contain deep mysteries. But these he regards as puerile cogitations. The similarity of the letters gave rise to mistakes, as the marginal notes prove. Besides these notes the copyists indicated many corrupt passages (by leaving a space in the midst of a sentence), the number of which, according to the Massorites, is twenty-eight. As an in-

¹ Kirkpatrick *in loco* (*Cambridge Bible*) says: "The Hebrew cannot thus [as in the A. V.] be translated. We must render *Saul was* [] *years old when he began to reign, and reigned* [] *and two years over Israel*. Either the numbers were wanting in the original document, or they have been accidentally lost. Thirty is supplied in the first place by some MSS. of the Sept., and is a plausible conjecture. The length of Saul's reign may have been twenty-two or thirty-two years. . . . The whole verse is omitted by the older copies of the Septuagint, and possibly was not in the original text."

stance of such corrupt passages he quotes Gen. 4 : 8, "And Cain talked with Abel his brother . . . and it came to pass, when they were in the field," etc.; where an empty space is left, we expect to hear what Cain said to his brother.¹

Chronicles.—At the beginning of the tenth chapter Spinoza speaks of Chronicles as having been written long after Ezra and perhaps after the restoration of the temple by Judas the Macabaeæan. For according to 1 Chron. 9 : 3 seq., the families are mentioned which dwelt first—*i. e.*, in the time of Ezra—at Jerusalem. In v. 17 the porters are mentioned, of whom Neh. 11 : 19 also mentions two. This shows that these books were written long after the restoration of the city. Who the author of these books was, Spinoza leaves undecided, though he is surprised at their reception into the canon, whereas the books of Wisdom, Tobit, and others, which are called apocryphal, were omitted.

Psalms.—The Psalms, too, were collected during the second temple and divided into five books. The 88th Psalm was, according to the testimony of Philo, composed when king Jehoiakin was still imprisoned at Babylon, and the 89th after his release.

Proverbs.—The Proverbs of Solomon were collected about the same time, or at the earliest in the time of Josiah. Spinoza bases his opinion on ch. 25 : 1 : "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out." He goes on and says that he cannot pass over with silence the audacity of the rabbis who intended to exclude this book, together with that of Ecclesiastes, from the canon.

Prophetical Books.—Of these books Spinoza says that they contain fragments gathered together from other books, which were not always copied in the same order in which the prophets spoke or wrote.

Isaiah.—Isaiah commenced to prophesy under king Uziah, as the copyist attests in the first verse. But he did not only prophesy at that time, but also described all the deeds of this king

¹ The empty space referred to here by Spinoza is called by the Massorites *piska*; for this comp. my art., *The masoretic Piska in the Hebrew Bible*, in *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature*, 1886.

in a book (comp. 2 Chron. 26: 22), which we now miss. What we have is copied from the chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel. The rabbis also tell that Isaiah also prophesied under King Manasseh, by whom he was finally killed.¹

Jeremiah.—The prophecies of Jeremiah are, according to Spinoza, without any chronological order, and contain repetitions and deviations. Thus chap. 21 speaks of the cause which led to Jeremiah's imprisonment, which takes place because he foretells to Zedekiah the fall of the city; ch. 22 breaks off and speaks of the prophecies addressed to Jehoiakin, Zedekiah's predecessor; ch. 25 contains the prophecies from the fourth year of Jehoiakim; then follow prophecies from the first year of that king, and thus it goes on without order, till finally ch. 38 returns again to ch. 21: 10 (as if these fifteen chapters were a mere parenthesis).

The imprisonment is described in ch. 38 and again differently in ch. 37. The other prophecies Spinoza regards as taken from the book which Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, which, according to ch. 36: 2, contained the prophecies of Jeremiah from Josiah to the fourth year of Jehoiakin. From this book chs. 45: 2 to 51: 59 also seem to have been taken.

Ezekiel.—Ezekiel is a fragment. This is already indicated in the first verses. The conjunction points to something which has already been said and connects with something that is to be said. But not only the conjunction, but also the whole connection presupposes other writings, for the thirtieth year, with which the book commences, indicates that the prophet goes on in the narrative, but does not begin it, which the writer himself also indicates by a parenthesis, v. 3: "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel." Spinoza also refers to Josephus *Antiq.*, 10: 9, where it is said that Ezekiel did prophecy that "Zedekiah shall not see Babylon," which we do not find in Ezekiel's book, but rather, ch. 17, that he should be taken captive to Babylon.²

¹ What befell Isaiah under Manasseh is related in the so-called *Ascensio Isaiae*; comp. my art., *Ascension of Isaiah* in McClintock & Strong's *Cyclop.*, vol. xi.

² Josephus *L. c.* 10: 7 (not 9) states not that Ezekiel did prophesy what we do not find in his book; he merely says that Zedekiah did not believe the prophecies of Jeremiah

Hosea.—Concerning this prophet Spinoza says that he is surprised that a prophet who prophesied more than eighty-four years should have left so little in writing. Carpzov says that God only suffered those prophecies to be written down which should be of use to the church of all times.

Jonah.—As a proof that we have not all the prophecies of the prophets, Spinoza also quotes Jonah, whose prophecies concern only the Ninevites, whereas he also prophesied to the Israelites, as may be seen from 2 Kings 14 : 25.

Job.—Concerning the book of Job, Spinoza remarks that some say that Moses wrote it,¹ and that the whole history is only a parable.² Others have taken the history as true, and thought that this Job lived at the time of Jacob, whose daughter Dinah was Job's wife. Ibn Ezra in his commentary asserts that the book was translated from another language into Hebrew. Leaving this question undecided, Spinoza thinks that Job was a heathen of the highest strength of mind, for Ezekiel mentions him, ch. 14 : 12, and believes that the change of fortune and Job's strength of mind induced many to dispute on divine providence, or at least the author to write the dialogue of this book. The contents and style do not resemble the work of one who was miserably sick and sitting in ashes, but of one sitting in his study and thinking over the matter.³ And here Spinoza goes on: "I should believe, with Ibn Ezra, that this book was translated from another language, since it seems to imitate heathenish poetry. For the father of the gods twice calls an assembly together, and Momus, here called Satan, replies with the greatest freedom to the speeches of God."

and Ezekiel, because they agreed that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive, but so that Ezekiel said that Zedekiah should not see Babylon, while Jeremiah said that the King of Babylon should carry him thither in bonds; comp. Jer. 32 : 4, 5 with Ezek. 12 : 13. But both oracles were fulfilled. Zedekiah was indeed taken to Babylonia, but saw it not because his eyes had been put out. Spinoza probably did not think of ch. 12 : 13.

¹ Comp. Talmud *Baba bathra*, fol. 14 a, where we read: Moses wrote his book, the chapter of Balaam and Job.

² Talmud *Baba bathra* fol. 15 a: Job did neither exist nor was he created, but is a parable. This view is also held by many ancient and modern writers.

³ So, also Hobbes, *I. c.* p. 178.

Daniel.—This book contains, from the eighth chapter, the writings of Daniel himself. The first seven chapters, Spinoza thinks, were taken from the chronologies of the Chaldæans. With Daniel, Spinoza connects the book of

Ezra, and thinks that the author is the same who continues to narrate the events of the Jewish history from the first captivity. With Ezra, Spinoza connects

Esther, on account of the conjunction with which this book begins. It cannot be the same book which Mordecai wrote, for in ch. 9: 20 another author speaks of Mordecai, that he wrote letters and what they contained. And in the same chapter, vs. 31, we read that queen Esther confirmed all things belonging to the festival of lots (Purim,) as well as all which was written in the book which was then (when these events were written) known to all. Concerning this book Ibn Ezra confesses, and every one must confess, that it was lost with the others. All other events of Mordecai, the historian reckons to the chronicles of the Persian kings. It can, therefore, not be doubted that this book, too, was written by the same author who narrated the events of Daniel and Ezra, and added to it the book of

Nehemiah, because it is called the second book of Ezra.

These four books, Daniel, Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah, Spinoza asserts to have been written by one and the same author, but by whom cannot even be surmised. As sources of this history Spinoza regards the annals of the princes and priests of the second temple mentioned Neh. 12: 23; 1 Macc. 16: 23, 24, which, however are now lost. That neither Ezra nor Nehemiah is the author of these books, Spinoza infers from Neh. 12: 9, 10, where the genealogy of the high priests down to Jaddua is given; the same Jaddua met Alexander the Great on his way to Jerusalem (Josephus *Antt.* 11, 8) and as this Jaddua, according to Philo, was the sixth and last high priest under the Persian rule, Spinoza asks whether some think that Ezra or Nehemiah had become so old as to outlive fourteen kings. He, therefore, is certain that these books were written long after the restoration of the temple-service by Judas the Maccabæan, and this in order to do away with the spurious books of Daniel, Ezra and Esther, composed by the Sadducees.

Spinoza comes to the conclusion, that before the time of the Maccabees, the canon of the Old Testament books did not yet exist, and that those which we have now were selected by the Pharisees of the second temple. The reason for this is Daniel 12 : 2, where the resurrection is taught which the Sadducees denied, and because the Pharisees themselves express this plainly in the Talmud. Thus we read in Talmud, *Shabbath*, fol. 30, vol. 2: Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rao: the sages wished to suppress the book of Coheleth, because his word opposed those of the law. But why did they not suppress it? Because the beginning and the end of the book are in accordance with the law. The same they intended to do with the book of Proverbs. And finally we read, fol. 13, vol. 2, of the same treatise; remember that man with respect, his name is Hanauja, the son of Hezekiah. Had it not been for him, the book of Ezekiel would have been suppressed, because its contents were contradictory to the word of the law. From this Spinoza infers that the scribes first consulted how the books ought to be, ere they were received as sacred.